

# COBBETT'S WEEKLY REGISTER.

VOL. 42.—No. 1.] LONDON, SATURDAY, APRIL 6, 1822. [Price 6d.

Published every Saturday Morning, at Six o'Clock.

## FAREWELL LETTER

TO

## THE LANDLORDS.

*On the Game-Laws, and particularly on the recent Executions at Winchester, and also on the lot of the Landlords themselves.*

Kensington, 2 April, 1822.

LANDLORDS,

I, LAST fall, addressed *ten letters* to you on the subject of the *Agricultural Report*. My object was to convince you, that you would be ruined; and, when I think of your general conduct towards the rest of the nation, and especially towards the labourers, I must say that I have great pleasure in seeing that my opinions are in a fair way of being verified to the full extent. I dislike the *Jews*; but, the *Jews* are not so inimical to the industrious classes of the country as you are. We should do a great deal better with the 'Squires from 'Change Alley, who, at any rate, have nothing of the ferocious and bloody in their

characters. Engrafted upon your native want of feeling is the sort of military spirit of command that you have acquired during the late war. You appeared, at the close of that war, to think that you had made a *conquest* of the rest of the nation for ever; and, if it had not been for the burdens which the war left behind it, there would have been no such thing as air, in England, for any one but a slave to breathe. The Bey of Tunis never talked to his subjects in language more insolent than you talked to the people of England. The DEBT, the blessed Debt, stood our friend, made you soften your tone, and will finally place you where you ought to be placed.

This is the last Letter that I shall ever take the trouble to address to you. In a short time, you will become much too insignificant to merit any particular notice; but, just in the way of *farewell*, and that there may be something on record to show what care has been taken of the partridges, pheasants and hares, while the

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Printed and published by C. CLEMENT, No. 183, Fleet Street.

[Price Sixpence Halfpenny in the Country.]

estates themselves have been suffered to slide away, I have resolved to address this one more Letter to you, which resolution has been occasioned by the recent *putting to death*, at Winchester, of two men denominated *Poachers*. This is a thing, which, whatever you may think of it, has not been passed over, and is not to be passed over, without full notice and ample record. The account of the matter, as it appeared in the public prints, was very short; but, the fact is such as never ought to be forgotten. And, while you are complaining of your "*distress*," I will endeavour to lay before the public that which will show, that the *law* has not been unmindful of even your *sports*. The time is approaching, when the people will have an opportunity of exercising their judgment as to what are called "*game-laws*;" when they will *look back* a little at what has been *done* for the sake of insuring *sport* to *landlords*. In short, landlords as well as labourers will *pass under review*. But, I must proceed to my subject, reserving reflections for a subsequent part of my letter.

The account, to which I have alluded, is this:

"HAMPSHIRE.—The Lent Assizes for this county concluded

"on Saturday morning. The Criminal Calendar contained 58 prisoners for trial, 16 of whom have been sentenced to suffer death, but two only of that number (*poachers*) were left by the Judges for execution, viz. James Turner, aged 28, for aiding and assisting in killing Robert Baker, gamekeeper to Thomas Asheton Smith, Esq. in the parish of South Tidworth, and Charles Smith, aged 27, for having wilfully and maliciously shot at Robert Snelgrove, assistant gamekeeper to Lord Palmerston, at Broadlands, in the parish of Romsey, with intent to do him grievous bodily harm. The Judge (Brough) observed, it became necessary to these cases, that the extreme sentence of the law should be inflicted, to deter others, as resistance to gamekeepers was now arrived at an alarming height, and many lives had been lost."

The first thing to observe here is, that there were sixteen persons sentenced to suffer death; and that, the only persons actually put to death, were those who had been endeavouring to get at the hares, pheasants or partridges of Thomas Asheton Smith, and of our Secretary at War, Lord Palmerston.

Whether the Judge, Burrough (who was long Chairman of the Quarter Sessions in Hampshire), uttered the words ascribed to him, or not, I cannot say; but, the words have gone forth in print, and the impression they are calculated to make is this: that it was necessary to put these two *men to death*, in order to deter others from resisting gamekeepers. The putting of these men to death has excited a very deep feeling throughout the County of Hants; a feeling, very honourable to the people of that County, and very natural to the breast of every human being.

In this case there appears to have been a killing, in which Turner assisted; and Turner might, by possibility, have given the fatal blow; but in the case of Smith, there was no killing, at all. There was a mere *shooting at*, with intention to do him bodily harm. This latter offence was not a crime for which men were put to death, even when there was no assault, or attempt at assault, on the part of the person shot at; this was not a crime punished with death, until that terrible act, brought in by the late Lord Ellenborough, was passed, and formed a part of our matchless Code; that Code which there is such a

talk about *softening*; but which softening does not appear to have in view this Act, or any portion of the Game-Laws.

In order to form a just opinion with regard to the offence of these two men that have been hanged at Winchester, we must first consider the *motives* by which they were actuated, in committing the acts of violence laid to their charge. For, it is the *intention*, and not the mere act, that constitutes the crime. To make an act murder, there must be *malice afore-thought*. The question, therefore, is, did these men attack, or were they the attacked? It seems to be clear that they were the attacked parties; for they are executed, according to this publication, to deter others from *resisting* gamekeepers!

I know very well that there is Law for this; but what I shall endeavour to show is, that the Law ought to be altered; that the people of Hampshire ought to petition for such alteration; and that if you, the Landlords, were wise, you would petition also, for an alteration, if not a total annihilation of that terrible Code, called the Game-Laws, which has been growing harder and harder, all the time that it ought to have been wearing away. It should never be forgotten, that, in

order to make punishments efficient in the way of example, they must be thought just by the Community at large; and they will never be thought just if they aim at the protection of things belonging to one particular class of the Community, and, especially, if those very things be grudged to this class by the Community in general. When punishments of this sort take place, they are looked upon as unnecessary, the sufferers are objects of pity, the common feeling of the Community is in their favour, instead of being against them; and it is those who cause the punishment, and not those who suffer it, who become objects of abhorrence.

Upon seeing two of our countrymen hanging upon a gallows, we naturally, and instantly, run back to the cause. First we find the fighting with gamekeepers; next we find that the men would have been transported if caught in or near a cover with guns, after dark; next we find that these trespassers are exposed to transportation because they are in pursuit, or supposed to be in pursuit, of partridges, pheasants or hares; and then, we ask, where is the foundation of a law to punish a man with transportation for being in pursuit of these animals? And

where, indeed, is the foundation of the Law, to take from any man, be he who he may, the right of catching and using these animals? We know very well; we are instructed by mere feeling, that we have a right to live, to see and to move. Common sense tells us that there are some things which no man can reasonably call his property; and though poachers (as they are called) do not read Blackstone's Commentaries, they know that such animals as are of a wild and untameable disposition, any man may seize upon and keep for his own use and pleasure.

"All these things, so long as they remain in possession, every man has a right to enjoy without disturbance; but if once they escape from his custody, or he voluntarily abandons the use of them, they return to the common stock, and any man else has an equal right to seize and enjoy them afterwards."

In the Second Book and Twenty-sixth Chapter of Blackstone, the poacher might read as follows: "With regard likewise to wild animals, *all mankind had by the original grant of the Creator* a right to pursue and take away any fowl or insect of the air, any fish or inhabitant of the waters, and any beast or



“reptile of the field: and this  
 “natural right still continues in  
 “every individual, unless where  
 “it is restrained by the civil laws  
 “of the country. And when a  
 “man has once so seized them,  
 “they become, while living, his  
 “qualified property, or, if dead,  
 “are absolutely his own: so that  
 “to steal them, or otherwise in-  
 “vade this property, is, according  
 “to the respective values, some-  
 “times a criminal offence, some-  
 “times only a civil injury.”

Poachers do not read this; but that reason which is common to all mankind tells them that this is true, and tells them, also, *what to think*, of any positive law that is made to restrain them from this right granted by the Creator. Before I proceed further in commenting upon the case immediately before me, let me once more quote this English Judge, who wrote fifty years ago, when the Game Code was mild indeed, compared to the one of the present day. “Another violent alteration,” says he, “of the English Con-  
 “stitution consisted in the depo-  
 “pulation of whole countries, for  
 “the purposes of the King’s royal  
 “diversion; and subjecting both  
 “them, and all the ancient forests  
 “of the kingdom, to the unreason-  
 “able severities of forest laws

“imported from the continent,  
 “whereby the slaughter of a  
 “beast was made almost as penal  
 “as the death of a man. In the  
 “Saxon times, though no man  
 “was allowed to kill or chase the  
 “King’s deer, yet he might start  
 “any game, pursue, and kill it  
 “upon his own estate. But the  
 “rigour of these new constitutions  
 “vested the sole property of all  
 “the game in England in the  
 “King alone; and no man was  
 “entitled to disturb any fowl of  
 “the air, or any beast of the  
 “field, of such kinds as were  
 “specially reserved for the royal  
 “amusement of the Sovereign,  
 “without express license from the  
 “King, by a grant of a chase or  
 “free warren: and those fran-  
 “chises were granted as much  
 “with a view to preserve the  
 “breed of animals, as to indulge  
 “the subject. From a similar  
 “principle to which, though the  
 “forest laws are now mitigated,  
 “and by degrees grown entirely  
 “obsolete, yet from this root has  
 “sprung up a bastard slip, known  
 “by the name of the game-law,  
 “now arrived to and wantoning  
 “in its highest vigour: both  
 “founded upon the same un-  
 “reasonable notions of permanent  
 “property in wild creatures; and  
 “both productive of the same

“tyranny to the commons: but  
 “with this difference; that the  
 “forest-laws established only one  
 “mighty hunter throughout the  
 “land, the game-laws have raised  
 “a little Nimrod in every manor.”

When this was written nothing was known of the present severity of the law. Judge Blackstone says that the Game Law was then wantoning in its *highest vigour*; what, then, would he have said, if any one had proposed to make it *felony* to resist a Game-keeper? He calls it tyranny to the commons, as it existed in his time; what would he have said of the present Code; which, so far from being thought a thing to be *softened*, is never so much as mentioned by those humane and gentle creatures, who are absolutely supporting a sort of reputation, and aiming at distinction in Society, in consequence of their incessant talk about softening the Criminal Code?

The Law may say what it will, but the feelings of mankind will never be in favour of this Code; and whenever it produces putting to death, it will, necessarily, excite horror. It is impossible to make men believe that any particular set of individuals, should have a permanent property in wild creatures. That the owner

of land should have a quiet possession of it, is reasonable and right and necessary; it is also necessary, that he should have the power of inflicting pecuniary punishment in a moderate degree upon such as trespass on his lands; but, his right can go no further according to reason. If the law give him ample compensation for every damage that he sustains, in consequence of a trespass on his lands, what right has he to complain?

The law authorises the King, in case of invasion, or apprehended invasion, to call upon all his people to take up arms in defence of the country. The Militia Law compels every man, in his turn to become a soldier. And upon what ground is this? There must be some reason for it, or else the law would be tyranny. The reason is, that every man has *rights* in the country to which he belongs; and that, therefore, it is his duty to defend the country. Some rights, too, beyond that of merely living, merely that of breathing the air. And then, I should be glad to know, what rights an Englishman has, if the pursuit of even wild animals is to be the ground of transporting him from his country? There is a sufficient punishment

provided by the law of trespass ; quite sufficient means to keep men off your land altogether ; how can it be necessary, then, to have a law to transport them for coming upon your land ? No, it is not for coming upon the land, it is for coming after the wild animals, which nature and reason tells them, are as much theirs as they are yours.

It is impossible for the people not to contrast the treatment of these two men at Winchester with the treatment of some *gamekeepers* that have killed or maimed the persons they call Poachers ; and it is equally impossible for the people, when they see these two men hanging on a gallows, after being recommended to mercy, not to remember the almost instant pardon, given to the Exciseman, who was not recommended to mercy, and who was found guilty of wilful murder in the County of Sussex !

It is said, and, I believe truly, that there are more persons imprisoned in England for offences against the *game-laws*, than there are persons imprisoned in France (with more than twice the population) for *all sorts of offences put together*. When there was a loud outcry against the cruelties com-

mitted on the *priests* and the *seigneurs* by the people of France, ARTHUR YOUNG bade them *remember* the cruelties committed on the people by the *game-laws*, and to bear in mind how many had been made *galley-slaves* for *having killed, or tried to kill, partridges, pheasants and hares !*

However, I am aware that it is quite useless to address observations of this sort to you. I am quite aware of that ; and yet, there are circumstances, in your present situation, which, one would think, ought to make you *not very gay* upon the hanging of the two men at Winchester. It delights me, I assure you, to see the situation that you are in ; and I shall, therefore, now, once more, and for *the last time* address you, upon that subject.

We all remember how haughty, how insolent, you have been. We all bear in mind your conduct for the last thirty-five years ; and the feeling of pleasure at your present state is as general as it is just. In my *Ten Letters* to you I told you that you would lose your estates. Those of you who have any capacity except that which is necessary to enable you to kill wild animals, see this now, as clearly as I do ; and yet you evince no intention to change your

courses. You hang on with unrelenting grasp; and cry "*pauper*" and "*poacher*" and "*radical*" and "*lower orders*" with as much insolence as ever! It is always thus: men like you may be convinced of error; but they never change their conduct. They never become just because they are convinced that they have been unjust: they must have a great deal more than that conviction to make them just.

It pleases me to see you *amused* in the manner that you are. Pray take care of the "*game*;" and the taxgatherers will take care of the fields and woods that the game feed on and live in. Pray take care to *preserve* the partridges, pheasants and hares, and also to preserve the foxes that eat all these. Attend to these matters, carry on wars with poachers, and pursue to the gallows those that defeat you in the field; and, as to the *estates themselves*, they will find most vigilant guardians in the taxgatherers and the fundholders. Do this and believe firmly, that a "*surplus of five millions*" will save you, and believe also that there is a surplus of five millions, and you will soon be in as comfortable a state as it is possible for any just man to wish to see you in.

A very pretty picture of the state of things has been exhibited by Mr. WESTERN, who says that *two-thirds* of the farmers of Essex are insolvent. A letter that I have just received from *that county* contains a curious and interesting case; and, as it is one which will soon be quoted as a *precedent*, I shall state it pretty fully. A farmer, in Essex, famous for his agriculture, and renting, at a *very high rent*, a large farm of one of the haughtiest and most grasping of the very haughtiest and most grasping family that ever existed even in Normandy; this farmer, being wholly unable to pay, *except out of capital*, any rent at all, and being bound by *lease* which had several years to run, applied to his haughty and greedy lord to reduce his rent in a great degree. The lofty lord would take off but a mere trifle. The tenant, found himself bound to his absolute ruin, as he must have lost at least *fifteen hundred pounds a year* for several years to come. The landlord would not take the lease off his hands. He had, therefore, this choice; to be wholly beggared, or to *sell off his stock and leave the country*.

He chose the latter; and, *before Lady-Day*, sold off his live and dead stock, his farming imple-



ments, and every rag and stick of his household furniture; and is now gone no one knows whither. The landlord made attempts to stop the sale; but, in vain; for the rent was ready; or, at least, none was due, and he had no right to touch the property of the tenant, until some rent was due.

Thus, as my Correspondent observes, "a link in the celebrated chain has dropped clean out," and, in spite of our "beautiful constitution," one member has withdrawn from the family compact of "standing or falling together." This tenant, my Correspondent says, has always borne a high character for probity as well as for industry and skill; and the question now to be answered, is, has his present conduct been agreeable to the laws of morality, or has it not? I will not take upon me to answer this question; but, I will state the case fairly; I will give the arguments on both sides; and then leave the farmers, who are of the "chain," to judge for themselves.

It is very easy to call a man a *rogue*, when we cannot get from him as much as we want to get. It is very easy to accuse him of *breach of engagements*. But, as to hold to wicked engagements is never right, so it is not always

wrong to break through others that are not positively wicked.

LANDLORD. You took the farm with your eyes open; you had your chance of good times; and, if wheat had risen to 50s. a bushel, instead of falling to 5s. a bushel, you would not then have suffered me to break my engagements.

TENANT. I was, to be sure, not deprived of my sight or of my senses when I took the farm; but I had, in fact, no chance on my side. I contracted to have such chance; I should have had the chance of gain as well as of loss; but, what has happened? Since I took the farm laws have been passed to make my wheat sell at 5s. a bushel instead of 15s. and, therefore, I am, in conscience, freed from my engagement.

LANDLORD. But, here; is there not your name to the lease; and will you say, that it is honest to fly from your solemn engagements; will you set up yourself against the laws?

TENANT. What law have you for that lease? The law that existed in 1812. But, that law, as far as relates to landlord and tenant, has been since abrogated. It has, in reality, been wholly abolished as to its spirit. The meaning of my lease was, that it should be violated on neither side;

and, if you, or others for you, have first violated it, I must save myself from the consequences as well as I can.

LANDLORD. At this rate no engagement could ever hold; for any one may pretend, that *any change* in the laws of the country, made after the signing of a lease, sets aside the moral obligation to adhere to the lease; so that no tenant any more than landlord could ever be safe.

TENANT. I must beg your pardon here; and, if you suppose my principle to apply in such a boundless manner, I must give the same stretch to yours; and then let us suppose a man to rent a light-house on the shore, and suppose a law to be subsequently passed to *prevent all use of light-houses*. Will you say, that the man is in conscience bound to continue to pay rent on the light-house as long as he have anything to pay with?

LANDLORD. This is not an analogous case at all; for, the law does not forbid you *to use the farm*. You are as free to use it now as you were before the paper-money and bullion laws were passed.

TENANT. To *use*? For what purpose? The *object*, contemplated by the lease, is, in both cases *the same*. The use of the

light-house to the tenant is to *yield him something to pay rent with* at least; and this is the use of the farm. And, if a law, or laws, be passed to *destroy this use*, the farmer's case is just the same as that of the light-house man.

LANDLORD. But, you knew when you signed your lease, that the Parliament had the power of passing *what laws it pleased*. You had seen it pass some pretty oddish laws. You had seen it pass laws to authorise the Bank to refuse to pay its promissory notes. You had seen it pass laws to quash *qui tam* actions against the non-resident Clergy. You had seen enough, one would think, to make you take all chances into view, when you signed your lease.

TENANT. I had seen a great deal, I must confess; but, it never yet was a rule of law, that an engagement between man and man *contemplates* the breach of it by the law itself, which is its only guarantee. And the very act of my signing the lease proves, that I could not have in contemplation the chance of a law being passed to take away the possibility of my holding the farm without ruin, any more than I could have an earthquake in contemplation; and, will you say, that, if an earth-

quake were to take away, or the sea cover, half the farm, I am still bound in conscience to pay rent for the whole? And, what is the difference to me, whether half my produce or half my price be taken from me? In law I know that your claim would be good, though nine-tenths of the farm were covered by the sea; but, is it good *in conscience*? And, is it not to be a rogue to demand the payment in such a case? And should I be any more bound in conscience to pay such a rogue than I should be to pay a sum promised to a highwayman in order to save my throat from his knife?

LANDLORD. If men make a distinction between what *conscience* demands and what is demanded by their *positive* and *solemn engagements*, there can be no faith in any engagements at all; in a short time, none could possibly exist; and all confidence between man and man must be utterly destroyed.

TENANT. Oh, no! All confidence between man and man will not be destroyed, but, rather, increased, by my freeing myself from your *unjust* claims; claims that all mankind must know to be unjust and dishonest. Many positive engagements, gaming en-

gagements, contracts of minors, and various others, though positive enough, are set aside without any injury to public morals. And, though there be *no law* of Parliament for setting aside my lease, there is better reason for it than in one out of a thousand of the above cases.

LANDLORD. But, in the cases you have mentioned, the lending party has had something to do in deluding the other party and in producing the injurious engagement; whereas I did not make the law, nor assist to make the law, which has been taking away your capital, and that is reducing you to ruin. If I had been *one of those who made the law*, it would be a different matter; for, then, you might have some room to say, that I made it in order to get more rent from you than you contracted to pay.

TENANT. This makes, certainly, no difference *to me*, and very little *to you*, if you insist upon my fulfilling the *letter* of my engagement. For, what you now wish to get through the means of others, you would, I must conclude, have had no scruple to get by your own means. If you *approve* of the laws of which I complain, then you are a partaker in their unjust pressure on me; and, to convince

me, that you do not approve of them, you must show no disposition to profit from them at my expense.

LANDLORD. Well; it is, I see, useless to talk; and, therefore, I shall distrain for my rent, unless you pay it punctually, *bang up*.

TENANT. I will pay *bang up* once more, and that will be all; for, I shall, before the next rent be due, sell all off and leave not a straw for you to distrain on.

LANDLORD. But, I will put you in gaol.

TENANT. You must catch me first!

LANDLORD. But, will you not have a *little patience*. Better times may come. Things may come about. It is merely a sudden transition from war to peace; the sun of your prosperity has only hidden his head behind a cloud, and will, by-and-by, burst forth with more splendour than ever. Don't believe what that seditious fellow Cobbett says; it is all *blasphemy*; I can assure you it is; upon my word it is.

TENANT. Do you *really* think, now, in your conscience, that we shall see prosperous times and high prices again?

LANDLORD. Do I think so! Did you ever know me tell a lie?

TENANT. No. [I shall now. *Aside.*] But do you *really* think so?

LANDLORD. Do I think so! Look ye here, farmer: I *know*, that corn will be higher than ever next year. I *know* it, I tell you!

TENANT. But, *how* do you know it?

LANDLORD. Why . . . . but you'll not mention it again!

TENANT. Not I.

LANDLORD. Why, then [*whis-*

*pers*] my Lord Sapskull told me that they were *resolved* to give us higher prices than ever! What do you think of that?

TENANT. If I were *sure* that we should have high prices—

LANDLORD. You are sure; I am sure; upon my word and honour and soul we shall; "as G—d's my Saviour," we shall!

TENANT. Well, then, it can do you no harm to take back your lease and give me mine; for my poor wife is half crazy about it, and says that her children will come to want a mouthful of bread.

LANDLORD. She's a fool; she's a fool; a silly fool! Why ye arn't under petticoat government, are ye? Give her Judge Buller. Give a stick as thick as your thumb.

TENANT. No; I would rather not. She is very uneasy, and she is not well besides; and, as you are *sure* of higher prices than ever; as you are sure that Cobbett's wrong; as —

LANDLORD. He is; he is; a liar, a blasphemer; "as G—d's my Saviour" he is!

TENANT. Well, then, here's my lease.

LANDLORD. No; I won't take the lease! You sha'n't give up the lease. I'll make you pay your rent; or, "as G—d's my Saviour" I'll strip you as naked as a robin! And so I leave you to do what you can.—*Exit.*

TENANT. (*Solus.*) Egad, Cobbett's right! This hypocritical knave would take from me and my family our last penny, and send us to the poor-house, and that, too, under pretence of a scrupulous regard for morality. I'll pay him his rent this time; but, before next Lady-day, he shall have his



farm to himself, and I will be beyond his reach with what little means he has left me.

This is much about what will be going on soon after next harvest. In many cases it has taken place already. It is not pleasant to move a wife and family *across the Atlantic*; but, it is better to do that than to move them into a *poor-house*; and, in many cases, this is the *only* alternative; for, as to going to *France*, what are *good* English people to do there? And, besides, the Bourbons and all their mess may be set dancing again soon, for any thing that we know to the contrary. In America there are English manners and English people. There living is cheap and life unannoyed by the taxgatherer. There there is no robbing, no cutting of throats, no hangings like those at Winchester. There you may live for years, and never hear of or from the government, directly or indirectly. It is natural and right for men to like their native country best; but it is not natural for them to like a *poor-house*; and a *poor-house* must be the lot of those who continue to *pay rent* for land, in England, with present prices and present taxes.

Well, say you, but what are we landlords to do? Are we to have *nothing*? Yes; as much as you had in 1792, if you will *bring the taxes down to the standard of 1792*. This you have the *power* to do; and, if you want the *will*, what *justice* is there in taking the last shilling from the tenant? And, what a *folly* is it too, even if you *can* do it! For, when this tenant is destroyed, where is the *next* to come from? The next race of tenants can be little more

than *bailiffs*; and, at this very moment the *bailiff-system* has begun. The state of things is hourly growing worse; and worse it must grow; because there is nothing proposed that can have a tendency to check the evil, while that evil, like almost all other evils, has a natural tendency to increase.

Mr. WESTERN has lately let fall something about a re-consideration of *Peel's Bill*. But, what is meant by a reconsideration of this measure? Is it a *repeal*? Is it any thing to stop the progress of the Bill? That would be a plain downright *declaration of Bankruptcy*. It would be such an act of shame, disgrace, of infamy, as was never before heard of in any country upon earth. The parliament stands now, with the people, in a light not easily described, or, at least, that I do not care to describe; but, in what light would it stand, if this act were to be repealed? It is, therefore, useless to talk of a repeal of this act: it cannot be repealed without *certain death* to the system.

As to the schemes that are on foot, they cannot be regarded as other than the offspring of *sturried* not to say *insane* minds. They have all one common tendency, and that is to make the state of things *worse* than it is now. One would think that mere *instinct* would guide men to wiser conclusions. Men may commit errors, and even great errors, without being mad or ideots; but to adopt in *every* case, precisely that which is best calculated to augment the evil is strange indeed! The very worst feature in our case is, that those who have the *power* in their hands are *ignorant*

how to act. They really appear, for years past, to have had not the smallest particle of that knowledge which is necessary in the present emergency. They cannot see what is clearly seen by a very large part of the people; and, as to *me*, what is there that has happened, which I did not foresee and foretell?

All along throughout the years 1814 and 1815 I was warning the parliament of the result, if it did not reduce taxes or augment the paper-money. In 1818, when in America, I accidentally saw Mr. TIERNEY's speech urging a return to cash-payments; and, instantly, without a moment's hesitation, I answered that speech, and pointed out all the consequences of any such attempt, unless taxes and debt and contracts were reduced at the same time. I not only foretold evil; but pointed out how the evils would come, and on whom they would fall. At the close of a passage of this sort I had these words:—"But, you wish the Bank to proceed *gradually and gently*. When a man has means that are dropping in *gradually*, he may pay gradually; but, this is quite another case. The Bank has *now* all the means that it ever will have, or can have. If the paper be drawn in gradually, the approach of the misery and ruin and uproar will be gradual, that is all. The want of employment will come on *gradually and gently*, but it will come. The convulsion will be the *end* of the scene, but there will be a *convulsion*. To draw in the paper-money without reducing the interest of the Debt and all public pay and salaries, is to

"ruin all persons in trade, and to starve the labouring classes; and what signifies it whether this ruin and starvation come all at once, or by degrees?"

Mr. TIERNEY had talked of the evil being prevented by a *gradual* return to cash payments; and had said, that, by this *gradual* work, *ruin of farmers, want of employment and convulsion*, would be avoided. Nothing could be more absurd than this; unless it could have been proved, that the climax of the evil was a thing to be *permanently endured*. To change gradually from *bad* to *good* may, in many cases, be the best way; but to change gradually from *prosperity* to *distress* was what no man ever before thought of as a desirable thing, and especially as the means of lasting national safety! It seems always to have been expected, that, when the evil, when the distress, when the misery got to its height, it would *cease*, or, at least, *begin to decline*. How such a thought could find its way into any sane head I know not; but it did; and on this thought the Bill of Peel was adopted. As if they had said: there will be *suffering*; but, it will last but *four years*; and then we shall have cash-payments complete, and *the suffering will cease*! What! the suffering cease just when the ass had got the full weight of his burden on his back; which burden was *never to be taken off*? We have not yet got any thing like the *full burden* on us. The full burden will not be felt till about September or December 1823. Then the landlords; then you who tossed up your caps for the French war, and for Six-Acts,

will find the full burden stuck on fast to your backs.

Of this, too, you had *due warning* in the Letter to Mr. TIERNEY, where I said: "Wheat is 15s. a bushel, and a man, calculating upon that price, rents a farm at a hundred a-year. The drawings-in at the Bank bring wheat down to 5s. a bushel. The man cannot pay his rent, his stock is seized and sold. He goes to gaol, and his family to the poor-house. In the meanwhile there is no money to pay the journeymen and labourers. Employment cannot be had; and starvation follows. However, men do not, in very great numbers, starve to death, without an effort to save life. Hence robberies and thefts; and, to prevent detection, come murders. This is the natural, this is the inevitable progress."

Now, with all this before their eyes, with the danger not *asserted*, but *proved*, the parliament proceeded to pass the Bill of Peel, which (unaccompanied with other measures) was, as I then said it would be, an act of confiscation on all but the lenders and those who lived on the taxes. Such has it proved to be; and there is not a man in the kingdom who has so good a right to rejoice at it as myself. The warning was wise; it was *laughed* at; it was laughed at, too, because it came from *me*. What other than delight ought I to feel at the result? It may be said, that I ought to now recommend what I think would be best. I recommend to those who have brought the nation into this state to *get out of the way*, and to make room for *me* and for others. Oh, horrible!

Well, then, why should I recommend any thing? What is there that calls upon me to point out salutary measures? What should lead me to suppose this same body of men likely to make a good use of my recommendations? Do I see them disposed to do any of the things which the times demand? Do I hear one single man amongst them uttering sentiments towards *the people* such as I wish to hear uttered? Do I any where witness the smallest attempt to conciliate the people? I have no desire, and I ought to have no desire, that the landlords should adopt measures to save themselves. They have pushed things to such a length, that I can entertain no such desire. Out of their ruin a better state of things *may* come, and a *worse* cannot. They have ruined and tortured others enough, and now the ruin and torture are coming home to themselves.

What I wish to see, is, the **THING** to go on to its *full extent*. Not to be arrested or turned aside by any thing. That nothing may *happen* to furnish a pretence for saying, that the **THING** would have answered *if it had not been for this or that*. I should like to see all go on just as it is now proceeding, till we see what a Pitt-system will produce in the end. Let Debt and Sinking-fund and barracks and penitentiary and military academy and Staff and Civil List and the parson-magistrates and the boroughs and all the whole **THING** go on just as it is going without any "*ameliorations*," and then the world will witness such scenes as shall be remembered for half a score of centuries! We shall see a complete revolution in property;

we shall see high-sounding names brought down to mere mockery; we shall see landlords begging in the streets, or footmen to Jew-boys or to loan-jobbers' clerks. We shall see such things as never were seen, heard of, or dreamt of, before. Men do not take such a tumble all at once, nor all at a time. Here, indeed, the thing is effected *by degrees*; as is always the case, when men fall into beggary from riches. Many are already on the eve of being without a shilling. They, thus far, *disappear* from public view; but, by-and-by, when they fall faster, they will have less shame, and there will be no means left of hiding them. As soon as the *present race of renters* are gone, and that will be pretty quickly, the Landlords will come tumbling down. It is even now nothing but the capitals of the tenants that hold thousands of them up; and, if those tenants, who have capital, resolve to keep it, the rot amongst the landlords must speedily appear.

Now, Landlords, I have addressed to you the last words that you will ever get from me. The Letters that I shall write on the *new Agricultural Report*, and the first of which will be published next week, I shall address to other persons; perhaps the ploughmen, or the poachers; and of one thing I am very sure; namely, that I cannot address them to any description of persons that are less worthy of respect than you are. I can address them to nobody of so little understanding, so little public spirit, so little humanity, so little mercy. My main object shall be to show the farmers their danger; to warn them against the delusive traps set for them; and

to induce them to save themselves and families. They have had no power to prevent this state of things; you have. They have, indeed, been instruments in your hands; but, if I can prevent it, they shall be your instruments no longer; and I have great satisfaction in believing, that I possess this power of prevention to a very considerable extent. You are tasting, and about to taste, the fruits of a system of your creating and upholding. You have nobody to blame; and, which forms the jet of the case, you have produced your own ruin while you have been ruining others, and those too whom it was your duty to preserve. I have for twelve years at least been praying to see you in your present state: my prayer is answered at last, and now I bid you *farewell*.

WM. COBBETT.

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#### NORWICH MEETING.

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On Friday the 29th March, a most numerous Meeting, consisting principally of Farmers and Tradesmen, assembled and dined at the White Swan in this City, according to public advertisement, for the purpose of considering and discussing the existing Agricultural Distress, and the necessity of a Reform in Parliament. To this Meeting Mr. Cobbett had received a special invitation. Mr. Samuel Clarke was unanimously called to the Chair. After the cloth was removed the following toasts were drunk.

The Memory of the beloved and lamented Queen Caroline, in solemn silence.

The Earl of Albemarle.

T. W. Coke, Esq.



**Mr. Peel and his Bill.**

The Buckingham Bill of Fare, and may it be a warning to English Farmers.

A Reform in the Commons' House of Parliament on the basis of Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments.

The Chairman then rose to propose the health of their guest, Mr. Cobbett.---Drunk with three times three.

Mr. COBBETT, in returning thanks to the company for the flattering manner in which his health had been drank, said, he would not so far affect modesty as to disclaim in any degree meriting the marked approbation with which he had been honoured, but could assure them from the bottom of his heart that he felt and always should feel deeply penetrated by their kindness. Here I should stop, Gentlemen, (said Mr. C.) well knowing my inability, generally speaking, to communicate useful knowledge to a company like this. But, coming, as I do, immediately from the seat of *wisdom*; that is to say, from the seat of our government, it may be expected, perhaps, that I should communicate some *news*, or intelligence respecting what that wisdom appears to have in store for the relief of a people whom it acknowledges to be in the deepest distress. When I had, upon a former occasion, the honour of addressing a company in this room, the thing which I had most at heart was, that with regard to the farmers, there was no hope but in flight from their farms, except, indeed, they could hold them without the payment of rent. I have seen nothing in the movements of time; and certainly nothing in

the motions of the "collective wisdom," to make me change my opinion. I then expressed my conviction that prices would fall lower than they then were; and lower they have already fallen. My opinion now is that they will fall still lower, and much lower, before May 1823; and the main thing for the farmers to bear in mind is that, if they pay any rent at all from this time forward, they must, except in very peculiar cases, pay that rent out of capital. Even if he squeeze his labourers down to half starvation, and drive them to absolute despair, the farmer will not have the means of paying rent, if the present taxes be retained and if Peel's Bill be enforced. My reasons for this opinion I have before stated upon various occasions; but I now wish to notice an argument, or, rather, alleged facts, in opposition to my opinions with regard to an expected further fall of prices. It is alleged by Bank Directors in and out of Parliament, that they have now a greater quantity of gold and paper, that is to say, of circulating medium altogether, out at the Bank of England, than they had some time ago; and a much greater quantity out than they had in the year 1792. Now, this being the matter of fact, we may believe it or not, according to our belief or disbelief in the words of the parties; and I have no objection to say for my own part, that I have not the smallest belief in any thing on account of its being asserted by the Bank or its Directors. But, if we were to admit these allegations to be true, they amount to nothing in contradiction of my opinion; but, as we

shall presently see, rather make for that opinion. The *Bank* may have more money out; but how does the Bank know what the country bankers have out? The Bank can know nothing of that for a certainty. And how can the Bank know what gold it has out? It has none out; for, the moment it is out, it no longer belongs to the Bank. It belongs to those who hold it. It is not compelled to return to the Bank again; on the contrary, it can be dormant in hoard, or it can pass out of the country, as it is passing at this very moment in part. However, supposing the whole of the circulating medium of the country to be as great in amount as it was in the year 1792. I do not believe that it is so great; and I do not believe that, with gold-payments it can be kept to any thing like the amount of 1792, when France was inundated with assignats, and when England had got possession of a great part of its gold. The Bank Directors seem to forget the immense quantities of gold and silver that were circulating in England in the year 1792, of the amount of which quantities they can have no knowledge. But, gentlemen, this is the point that I am now coming to. Suppose, for sake of the argument, that the paper and coin now circulating, are equal in amount to the whole of the circulating medium in 1792. Let us adopt that proposition; but, before we conclude therefrom that the prices, as acted upon by the currency, ought to be as high as in the year 1792, we must see what effect taxes have upon this combined influence of currency and prices. The general prices

of a country must bear a proportion to the amount of the whole of the currency of the country, compared with the number and amount of transactions in that country. It is very clear, I think, that, if the transactions be to the amount of a hundred pounds, they must require a greater quantity of currency (general prices being the same), than if the transactions of the country amounted to only ninety pounds. Now, observe, then, the taxes are four times as great in amount as they were in 1792. Taxes are wholly pecuniary transactions; they require a portion of the currency to carry them on; and, of course, the present taxes withdraw from the employment in other transactions a considerable portion of the present currency; at least, they withdraw in that way, four times as much as they did in the year 1792; so that, that which they tell us about the quantity of circulating medium that they have out, amounts to just nothing at all; unless it be this, that they have out, more than they are likely to keep out; seeing that at this very moment, the gold is going out of the country, and seeing that to keep any of it here more of the paper must be drawn in.—We have nothing, therefore, in any thing that these persons advance, to induce us to expect a rise of prices. And it is manifest to me that the farmers ought, and as quickly as possible, to disencumber themselves of what must eventually be their ruin. Rent, however, is not the only thing to which the farmer has to look. The *tithes* form a very considerable portion of his outgoings; and, as I have shown in a recent

publication addressed to the farmers' wives, the parson now receives not only a tenth of the crop, but a tenth of the taxes expended to get the crop; so that he receives his crop tax-free; and has a decided advantage over the landlord. If the present thing could go on to its utmost extent, the parsons would still be doing very well, a long time after the landlords would be in the poor-house; and though, considering what has been the conduct of the greater part of the landlords, we might be disposed to care very little about this; still it would be a result very little consonant with justice; seeing that the war, which has been the occasion of those enormous taxes which are now producing all the evils of the country, was in no small degree the work of the clergy themselves. It was a war, we were told ten thousand times over, for our "*Holy Religion*." No one can deny this; it was asserted in the Parliament, in the King's proclamation, from the bench, from the pulpit, and at every corporation festival, till it almost became a crime to doubt the fact. Now, gentlemen, there are few of us, perhaps, who would not draw our swords in the cause of religion, if we could be made to understand how the cause of religion can be assisted by swords and powder and ball. But how stands the case. The French people, galled and ground down for ages by insolent petty tyrants called seigneurs, who had the power of hanging up men without judge or jury, and of sending them to the galleys for killing a partridge or a hare; the French people, compelled not only to pay a hundred

fold in tax for their salt, but compelled also to use, on pain of whipping and imprisonment, a certain quantity of salt in a year in each family; the French people, starved and tormented by an insolent aristocracy, and lazy, gormandizing, and profligate fraternities of priests, at last rose upon their old government; and one of their first acts was the *annihilation of tithes*. Then it was that the French Revolution became so detestable! Then it was that war became necessary for the preservation of what was blasphemously called our Holy Religion! Not a word was said about making war to *preserve tithes*. Not a word was said about this; but, as to go to war, as to use broad swords, pistols, and other weapons, against a disbelief in the gospel, seems so very unnatural a way of going to work, is it very astonishing if there were men, who saw the clergy the most zealous in urging on the war, which they were, from the beginning to the very close of it; is it astonishing, if there were men who seemed to believe that the preservation of tithes ought to have been substituted for the preservation of religion as the motive for the entering upon that war, of which we are now feeling the consequences?—It seems to be rather unfair, therefore, that the parson should be now receiving his income tax free, while it must be evident to every rational man that the landlord will shortly be receiving no income at all. But, this is not so much a matter of ours; it is a question between landlord and parson, thus far; and what I wish you to keep in view is, the

question between the farmer and the landlord.—That the taxes are the cause of the distress is now a pretty general opinion. It is the decided opinion of Lord GREY and Lord KING; and I have no hesitation to say, that, as far as I am able to judge, they are better authority than all the rest of the two Houses put together. I think it has been clearly proved by myself that the taxes are the cause of the distress; and, as the landlords have the power of reducing the taxes, if the burthen remain it is but just that they should bear it. Mr. Wodehouse seems satisfied with the shilling a bushel taken off the tax on malt. Let Mr. Wodehouse, then, bear the remainder of the taxes. If he will make no exertions to obtain the only relief that can be given, let him not endeavour to get from the farmer that capital which is all he possesses in the world. There have been enough of the landlords to talk with great boldness out of doors; but in doors they have been as gentle as doves. Be the consequences on them, therefore, and not upon the families of the farmers. The fact is, however, that they do not wish the consequences to be on them. They wish to get rents; much higher rents than in 1792.—Though the prices at this moment are far below those of 1792, and though the taxes are four times as great as in 1792. They wish the farmer to become a lower sort of person. They wish him to live with more frugality; to come down and to save out of himself and his family for the purpose of paying them. That Bill of Fare; that *Buckingham Bill of Fare*,

which you have very judiciously toasted as a warning to English farmers, may very fairly be considered as the scale to which the landlords wish to reduce you. The noble person who has favoured the community with that scale must be looked up to as very competent authority in the case. Had he been born a Duke, indeed, we might not have been disposed to pay so much attention to his scale; but, having recently been made a Duke, we must look upon him as a person in whose wisdom the King's ministers have very great confidence. We must suppose that his opinions as to all public matters are in accordance with theirs; being then told by this noble person that one pound of red sugar is the quantity sufficient for a week in the family of a farm of four hundred acres, we have before us a very good standard, whereby to gauge that depth of degradation to which the farmers must expect to fall, and in which they are expected to be contented. This two ounces and *almost* a quarter of red sugar a-day ought never to be for one moment absent from the mind of any single farmer in England. He ought to think of it every time that rent comes athwart his mind; and, let him remember, that even lower than this will be his state if he continue to pay rent for any considerable time longer. The lowering of rents is one of the means by which the farmers have been led on to their ruin. As a sharper lets the inexperienced gamester win now and then a trick, till the former comes and sweeps away his last shilling, so the crafty landlord entices on the farmer till he has got the power of



distrain, and then he comes and leaves him without even bread to put in his mouth. There is a noble exception in Lord Fitzwilliam, who gave up forty-five per cent. at once; but, even that noble lord will very soon see that his generosity, or, rather his justice, will be wholly unavailing without a reduction of the taxes. The Duke of Buckingham, whose Bill of Fare we have done ourselves the honour to toast, has recently had a meeting of his tenants at his great mansion at Stowe in Buckinghamshire, where he told them that he and they must stand or fall together; I have noticed this elsewhere; but I will again say, that that farmer must be a very great fool, who will have any share in the falling. The landlord has the power, if he had the will, to save himself; but if he will not do that, is the farmer bound to fall with him. The language of such landlords is plainly this: "You keep paying me rent, till you are a beggar, and then we will *fall together*." "No, no:" I should say; "I will keep what I have got; you have the power to stand if you will, and to enable me to stand too; and if you will not do this, fall by yourself, for I am sure I will not fall with you."—Gentlemen, it being so clear that the landlord must finally lose his estate, unless the taxes be very greatly reduced, one naturally wonders why the landlords do not cause such reduction. Pretty generally speaking they went to London, at the beginning of the winter with the resolution of causing taxes to be reduced. But, they were speedily talked over. Various means may have been

employed to nullify their previous resolutions; but the main argument, be you assured, has been this; that, to enfeeble the executive government must be productive of a state of things which would give the common people great power in the electing of Members of Parliament; and that this power would bring down the landlords and their families from that state of loftiness, that species of imperial sway in which they have long lived. In short, that every thing must go on as it is going on, or that there must be a Reform of the Parliament. This is the argument which has, I am quite convinced, induced the landlords to give up their resolutions and to try time and patience a little longer. Hence it is clear that we have no Reform of Parliament to expect as long as rents can be extracted from the capital of the farmer; and, I am very much afraid that, in too many cases, they will be extracted as long as there is any capital left. Mr. Webb Hall now sees this, too; for he, who has given the farmers so much bad advice, is now giving them the advice which I have so long been giving! From his presidential chair at Henderson's Hotel, this mighty king of clubs has sent a circular to his affiliated associations. In this circular, which he directs not to be put into print, and which, therefore, I have not yet caused to be printed, he advises them to give *notices to quit* in whole bodies; by whole districts; but, at the same time, being a very loyal man, and a strict observer of the laws, he advises them to take special care not to commit the crime of illegal combination

or conspiracy! I approve very much of this advice; but, this advice from Mr. Hall comes rather late; and, if it had not been for his trickery and quackery, thousands of farmers would have saved themselves from ruin by quitting those farms which they have held in consequence of the false hopes with which he buoyed them up by his ridiculous schemes. The removal of the taxes being now the only hope, what hope is there of obtaining that removal except by a Reform of the Parliament? We have seen how vain it is to hope for complete redress through any other means; and I must confess that we ought to derive great pleasure from the reflection that the absolute necessity of a Reform has found its way into the minds of the farmers. This is a new circumstance in the history of the cause of Reform: and, it has produced a new kind of language on the part of its enemies. Formerly, when none but the labouring classes called for Reform, we were answered by the observation, that the respectable part of the community did not want it; that it was not wanted by the *enlightened Yeomanry*; and, while the Ministers were calling for the Six-Acts, Lord Liverpool observed, that that respectable part of the community, that most valuable description of persons, called the middle class, and especially the Yeomanry; that this valuable body was *perfectly sound*. That is to say, *sound asleep*; still, quiet, contented, staggering along like the ass of Issachar, between two burdens, and uttering not a sigh in the way of complaint. However, even this *sound* body

begins to move at last; and now what do they say to us? Why Mr. Gooch calls a county meeting a populace; and Lord Castle-reagh appeals from eight thousand petitioners of Suffolk, to the *education of the country*! So, in the county of Suffolk, though there be noblemen, gentlemen, freeholders, tradesmen, farmers, manufacturers; though the eight thousand names be all put down upon paper, this Lord can find amongst them no portion of the education of the country. To what end, then, have they been educating us for the last twenty or thirty years. To what purpose have they expended millions upon books and paper and pens and ink and masters and mistresses to teach us. For twenty long years they go on with their national schools, Lancaster schools, ink-schools, sand-schools, Sunday-schools, week-day schools, day-schools and night-schools; they boast all the while at what a rate they are enlightening our minds; and at the end of twenty years, they can find in eight thousand persons of the opulent and most beautifully managed county of Suffolk, not the smallest portion of the education of the country; and to find that education we must seek it amongst those, who first told us that Bank Restriction Acts were the salvation, and then that they were the destruction of a country; who at one time declared by solemn resolution, passed by a thundering majority, that the paper-money was not depreciated; and who afterwards as solemnly declared that it was depreciated at the time when they declared it was not; who at one time declared that the distress

arose from a superabundance of food, and the next year declared that it arose from a superabundance of mouths, and who have now declared again, that it arises from a superabundance of food, while one Scarlett has a project for checking the increase of mouths. Here are the proofs of the education of the country. We must be able, gentlemen, to bring ourselves up to this point, before it can be tolerated in us that we should pretend to possess any thing worthy of the name of education. One of the educated told us that it was only a "sudden transition from war to peace;" another, that the "sun of prosperity had only hid his head behind a cloud," and would speedily re-appear with all his wonted splendour. Of remedies they have afforded us abundance: corn-bills; digging holes one day and filling them up the next; lending money on the mortgaged poor-rates; and, lastly, it is, we are told, proposed to purchase up corn with the public money, to give the farmer a higher price now, and, of course, a lower price at some future time; giving him for *gain* by the transaction, a fair share of all the expenses attending it. This is the *education* of the country. This is what is to be attended to, while the petitions of those who were formerly called the enlightened yeomanry are to be cast aside as proceeding from what Mr. Gooch calls a populace.---But, let us not be borne down by talk of this description; let not the yeomanry, because they are called a populace, believe that they ought not to be attended to. There wants nothing but a hearty co-operation

on the part of the farmers in any one county of England to produce that reform, without which this country cannot be saved from utter confusion. Had Webb Hall's associations all petitioned for a Reform of the Parliament, we should have had it before now; and we shall have it now, if the yeomanry of any one county will come forth boldly and demand it. I do not mean upon their pretty horses and with swords by their sides; I mean, come forth with their petitions to Parliament, describing their distress, attributing that distress to taxation, declaring that they have no hope of a reduction of taxation without Reform, and thereon grounding a prayer for reform as the sole means of enabling them to continue their agricultural pursuits; but, above all things, saying to the landlords, give us reform, join us in the cause of reform, or take your lands to yourselves. This is the way; and if the farmers of any one county of England would but pursue it, they would save themselves and save their country; untoward as the circumstances of the times are in other respects, they give us hope of witnessing exertions like these. The distress of the farmers has greatly weakened the ties between the landlord and parson. When a man is making a fortune by a farm, he cannot be expected to talk very boldly to the landlord. A low bow is a small sacrifice when attended with considerable gains. But, when a man is losing by his farm, when he is coming to the state of the Buckingham Bill of Fare, and has, of course, but one miserable hat to his head, it is not worth while to

wear that out, by pulling it off to a man to whom he is paying his last shilling. A farmer is not disposed to put up with much rating and scolding from the landlord that is pocketing his capital. The latter may tell him to walk instead of ride; to pull off the coat and put on the smock-frock; to make his wife trudge to church in the dirt instead of riding in a gig; and I have heard of a landlord who had the modesty to tell his tenants, that they ought not only to do all this, but that *their fathers used to be glad to wear his father's old wigs.*---Now, gentlemen, an old wig is a very nasty thing; and if I were a tenant, I would wear no landlord's old wig; but keep the remainder of my capital to myself; and that would soon reduce him to a state to wear his own old wigs till they wasted from his head by degrees or had their place supplied by a woollen cap served out to him by the master of the poor-house. To which state I most sincerely wish every Landlord to come, who still harbours the unjust desire of withholding from the people at large their undoubted right to have a voice in choosing those who make the laws affecting their property and their lives.

After this, and upon the following toast being given, "May the man whose daily bread depends upon his labour never want employment," Mr. COBBETT resumed: pray, gentlemen, permit me, as there are no labourers here present, to say a word or two respecting their case. It is very much the fashion to ascribe the great amount of poor rates to what is called the idleness, drunkenness, and profligacy of the la-

bouring people. How comes it that the character of the common people of England can have undergone this astonishing change? We see the cultivation of the lands greatly increased in neatness, in beauty, and in excellence of all kinds; and, all this while we hear those who perform the labour of those fields, described as idle, drunken, and profligate, and as unworthy of enough to keep them from starving, out of the produce of those very fields. Again and again (for it never can be too often repeated) let the farmer recollect, that of whatever he pays in the shape of wages, nearly one-half goes, not to the comfort of the labourer, but is carried by him to be delivered up to the taxgatherer. Surprising, indeed, and most detestably unjust, that while between fifty and sixty millions are raised in taxes, and while a large portion of this comes out of the earnings of the labourer, the misery produced by that taxation should be ascribed to his idleness, drunkenness, and profligacy; and that, too, when it is notorious that he drinks water, where his less laborious grandfather drank good ale. Evidence of this was produced before the Agricultural Committee; but this was too *trifling* a circumstance for that Committee to mention in their Report! manifold are the schemes that have been and that are on foot to remedy this *evil*, as it is called, of poor rates; and there is a lawyer of the name of *Scarlett*, who had a project for refusing relief to every man able to work, whether he could get work or not; and also for refusing relief to every married man and woman and



their children, if the marriage took place, after the adoption of the project. You express your astonishment and horror, and well you may, at the very mention of a project like this; for you well know that the bare promulgation of it would produce consequences, such as, in the present state of the country, I do not think proper to describe. But I never can hear of this project, much less can I mention it, without expressing my indignation at observing, that these projectors, that are so eager to check the breeding of the labourers, who pay so large a portion of the taxes, never propose to check the breeding of those who live upon the taxes. There are about twenty thousand parsons, besides all the placemen, pensioners, sinecurists, granters, half-pay, army, navy, commissaries, quarter-masters, commissioners, taxgatherers, and lawyers, not a few, who are some way or other in the pay of the government. These are not only gentlemen and ladies themselves, but are all engaged in breeding gentlemen and ladies; for none of their children are ever to work; and not a soul of them ever will work as long as these taxes are collected. God knows how many *Knights* the war for religion has given us. And do you think that Sir Charles and my lady's sons and daughters will *work*? Not they, indeed, as long as they can get the means of living without work out of the taxes. It is a new thing in England, that even parsons' sons and daughters must necessarily be gentlemen and ladies. These sons used to be bound apprentice to trades, and their daughters become milliners, mantua-makers,

and upper servants. But now, all must have *situations*, which means something out of the taxes, in some shape or other. When parsons' sons were apprenticed to trades, the labourer drunk his ale by his own fire side. The taxes then amounted to six millions a year or thereabouts, and now they amount to fifty-six millions! We hear an everlasting grumbling about the money given to the labouring poor; but we hear not a word of grumbling about the many hundreds of thousands of pounds, voted by the House of Commons for the relief of the poor Clergy of the enormously rich Church of England. While two livings are frequently given to one man, and while he as frequently resides upon neither, but carries away the produce from the spot where it is raised, to spend it in London, Bath, Brighton, or France. Gentlemen, when we are thinking or talking of the case of the labourers, let us make that case our own, and reason on it accordingly. There are, perhaps, many in this room, with whom it has been merely accidental, that they are not labourers themselves. It is so with me, at any rate. If I had happened to marry in the country where I was born, in all human probability I should have been a labourer at this day; and if the pressure of taxation had been such (and that would have been the case) as to disable me to maintain my family without resorting to parish relief; should I have felt no resentment swell in my bosom at being branded with the name of pauper, and at being called idle, drunken and profligate, while a large portion of the fruit of my sweat went to pay taxes imposed

by persons in the election of whom I had not been suffered to have a voice? If I should have felt in this way, why are not others thus to feel? And would it not be baseness and cruelty in me to endeavour to stifle in the bosoms of others, feelings which I could not have stifled in my own? The farmers, be you assured, will and must, in a short time, perceive, that they and the labourers have one common and inseparable interest. Here the connexion is natural and indissoluble; and you will find, day by day, from this day forward, that the farmers will become convinced of the truth of what I now say. To be farmers without having labourers is impossible. The latter must and will have food; the present struggle that is going on is this:—the farmer is endeavouring to screw from himself, from his wife, from his family, from his labourers, the means of paying the rent demanded by the landlord. This he cannot accomplish, even at the expense of being hated and despised; and the sooner he gives up the struggle the better. With landlord or with labourers he must break; with one or the other he must be at enmity, if the taxes be not reduced; and when he looks about him; when he takes a moment to consider, can he fail to see, that, let come what will, he ought to desire to have the good wishes of his neighbours, and particularly of his labourers?

Lord COCHRANE's health having been given, Mr. Cobbett again rose, and observed, that he was, and always had been, perfectly convinced, that that gallant Lord was wholly innocent of the pretended crime laid to his charge; to which, said he, let me add, that

the country owes more to Lord Cochrane than to any Member of Parliament that I have ever known. To him we owe that famous list of sinecures and pensions, which, for the last fourteen years have furnished such ample means of exposing the system. The motion by which that was obtained was suggested, and, indeed, was drawn up by me. I had urged the making of that motion to every Member of Parliament that I knew or that I could come at. But I never found any one that would make that motion but my Lord Cochrane. And for making that motion, if he had never done any other good in his life, he would have merited the lasting gratitude of his country.

The venerable Major Cartwright.

Mr. Hunt, Mr. Wooler, and the rest of the brave men, who are, or have been, suffering in prison in the cause of Parliamentary Reform.

May the Tabernacles of Corruption be swept by the Broom of Reform.

Mr. Southwell, Mr. R. H. Gurney, Mr. Heagren Gibbs and Mr. Alderman Springfield, were successively drunk with applause.

Success to the Greeks in their struggle for independence.

Civil and Religious Liberty all over the World.

The Bishop of Norwich.

Mr. SPANTON, of Attleborough, on his health being drunk, returned thanks. He declared he was proud of the political principles he always entertained, and which had been, since he knew the meaning of politics, those of Mr. Cobbett. He begged leave to propose a toast which he was sure would have the approbation of all present; but before he gave the toast he intended to have the

honour of proposing, he felt peculiarly called upon to make a few observations with regard to the conduct of Mr. Anson, one of the Members for Yarmouth, whose name he regretted never to have seen in the lists of the Minorities which had supported Mr. Hume in his endeavours to effect Economy and Retrenchment. (Hear, hear.) In the election of Mr. Anson great exertions had been made by the friends of Reform, in the hopes that that cause would have his support; and he (Mr. S.) had aided, all in his power, his friend Mr. Palmer and others, to effect the return of that gentleman. What was his disappointment, however, that the return hitherto made by Mr. Anson to his constituents had been, to say the least of it, that of the grossest negligence? He hoped that the conduct of Mr. Anson would not escape the reprehension of Mr. Palmer and the other Electors of Yarmouth who had been so instrumental in his election, and for his own part stated his determination not again to give that Gentleman his support, if the past were to be a specimen of his future conduct.—Mr. Spanton then gave,—

Mr. Hume and the Minorities in the House of Commons who have supported that Gentleman in his arduous and laudable endeavours to effect Economy and Retrenchment.

"Our Worthy Chairman," was drank with three times three. Mr. Clarke returned thanks.

The evening was spent with the most uninterrupted good humour to a late hour, and the despondency to be expected from the prospect threatened by the Buckingham Bill of Fare was by no means visible.

## AGRICULTURAL REPORT.

### *Report from the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the Allegations of the several Petitions presented to the House in the last and present Sessions of Parliament, complaining of the distressed State of the Agriculture of the United Kingdom.*

The Select Committee appointed to inquire into the allegations of the several Petitions which have been presented to the House in the last and present Sessions of Parliament, complaining of the distressed state of the Agriculture of the United Kingdom, and to report their observations thereupon to the House;

CONSIDERED that among all the important objects referred to them, none could be more deserving of their earliest attention than an inquiry into any measures that could be suggested for affording some temporary relief to the distresses of which the numerous Petitioners with so much reason complain, and which appear, from the returns of the average prices of corn during the late weeks \*, to be progressively increasing rather than diminishing.

Your Committee do not venture to determine, whether the present state of the corn-market be owing to an excess of production, or to what extent that excess may reach, beyond the usual and requisite supply; or whether the necessities of the occupiers of land cause an unprecedented eagerness to dispose of their produce at almost any price; but it appears

* Prices, 16 March	.	45. 11.
9	.	46. 10.
2	.	46. 11.
23 Feb.	.	47. 7.

The highest price of any one week, in 1822, was 50s. 7d.

from an official Return, that the quantity of British wheat and oats (but not of barley) sold in Mark-lane, between the 1st November and 1st March last, has very considerably exceeded the quantity sold in the corresponding months of the twenty preceding years.

Such an excess of supply beyond demand can have no other effect than to continue the depression of price, and increase the accumulation of the stock upon hand; while it is evident, from the present very low rate of price on the continent of Europe, as compared with prices in this country, that there is no chance of resorting to the natural expedient of relieving the market by exporting any portion of our own corn, even with the aid of any bounty which would not be excessive.

Two other modes have therefore been under the consideration of your Committee; by the first of which it was proposed, that one million of Exchequer Bills should be applied to purchasing, through the agency of Government, and laying up in store, a certain portion of wheat grown in the United Kingdom; and by the second, that facility and encouragement should be offered to individuals to deposit a part of their stock in warehouses, so that they might not be forced to come into the market simultaneously, and under the disadvantage of excessive competition, but might be enabled to wait until the supply, having approached nearer to the wants of the consumers, might afford, if not a remunerating, at least a price somewhat less ruinous for their produce.

With regard to the first of these proposals, the general objections against making the public, through the Executive Government, a dealer and speculator in corn, the suspicions to which it might give rise, and the uneasiness in the public feeling, which it might eventually excite, the danger of its being drawn into precedent, the claims which it might be supposed to give to other important articles of domestic produce, when-

ever they might be exposed to similar depression, and the universal rule of allowing all articles, as much as possible, to find their own natural level, by leaving the supply to adjust itself to the demand, discourage your Committee from recommending it, even under this extraordinary emergency, and with all the guards and qualifications of a temporary expedient. But with regard to the second, although much less efficacious in its operation, the objection of Government becoming a purchaser does not apply, as individuals would in this case act for themselves, and according to their own discretion, the Government interfering no otherwise than by making advances upon the commodity deposited, which would be repaid, with a low rate of interest, as soon as the article should be brought to market.

For effecting this object, two different modes have been suggested; by one of which it was proposed, that when the weekly average price is under 58s. (the import scale remaining as at present) wheat should be stored, subject to a monthly allowance of 6d. per quarter, until the average price should reach 65s.

The whole quantity not to exceed 600,000 quarters, and the time for which the allowance should be payable not to exceed 12 or 13 months.

Not more than a certain number of quarters, nor less than another specified number of quarters, to be stored on the part of any individual or firm.

The owner of the corn, so deposited, to be at liberty to withdraw it at any time, waving his claim to allowance, or refunding it.

The other proposition was, That for the purpose of relieving the glut which at present presses upon the grain-market, the Government, whenever the average price of wheat shall be under 60s. should grant advances of money upon such corn of the growth of the United Kingdom, as should be deposited in fit and proper warehouses upon the River Thames, and in the ports to be hereafter spe-



cified, to an extent not exceeding two-thirds of the market value of such corn; the quality of the corn and the fitness of the warehouses, to be approved of by officers to be appointed by the Government.

The loan to be at the rate of 3 per cent. and the period of deposit not to exceed 12 months.

The corn to be withdrawn at the will of the depositor, upon payment of the interest, warehouse rent, and other charges.

The sum of one million so applied, would probably be fully adequate to give a temporary check to the excess which is continually poured into the already overstocked market.

If the House should be inclined to agree with your Committee in countenancing the latter of these propositions, it is evident that it ought to lead to some immediate proceeding; and although no very great effect can be contemplated from adopting it, its operation, as far as it may extend, can hardly fail to afford some temporary relief.

There is another measure also to which it is fit to call the early attention of the House.

The foreign grain and flour of all sorts in different warehouses under the King's lock, appears to have amounted on the 5th of January last to 897,136 quarters; with regard to which, although there is little probability that it can soon come into competition with our home produce, yet it still hangs over the market in a formidable mass, ready to be poured in at once, creating no small degree of panic as to its future operation, and invested with a sort of claim (which is of the utmost importance) to be brought out free from duty, whenever the ports shall be opened under the existing law, even supposing any duty shall be imposed by Parliament, under an alteration of that law, upon all corn hereafter to be imported from foreign parts.

To relieve the market from both these inconveniences, it may be proper to permit the holders of such corn now in warehouses under cer-

tain adequate regulations and restrictions, to have the same ground into flour for the purpose of exportation; and also to provide, by legislative enactment, that in future any foreign corn warehoused in this kingdom shall be considered as corn coming from abroad, and subject to all such duties and regulations as are or may from time to time be imposed upon corn coming directly from a foreign port.

A proposition, which was submitted to your Committee, for advancing loans to parishes on the credit of the rates, appeared to be attended with so many difficulties, and to be so little applicable to the purpose of alleviating the distresses which are complained of, that they do not deem it necessary to enter into any examination of it, nor to lay it before the House.

Much as your Committee lament, that so little prospect of immediate relief can be held out to the urgent distresses which have been submitted to their anxious consideration, they think it material to obviate and counteract any unfounded alarm which may have been, either casually or industriously, circulated, that there was ever the least intention entertained by your Committee, of rendering the present condition of the British cultivators worse than it is under the existing law; and they therefore submit, with great confidence, to the House, that the Act of the 55th of the late King, c. 26, which regulates the importation of foreign corn, ought to continue in force until the average price for wheat shall be 80s. per quarter, and other kinds of grain in proportion.

It is impossible to carry protection further than monopoly; and it cannot be denied, that this monopoly the British grower has possessed for more than three years, that is, ever since February 1819, with the exception of the ill-timed and unnecessary importation of somewhat more than 700,000 quarters of oats, which took place during the summer of 1820. It must be considered fur-

ther, that this protection, in consequence of the increased value of our currency, and the present state of the supply of corn combined with the prospect of an early harvest, may, in all probability, remain uninterrupted for a very considerable time to come.

But for the purpose of obviating the dangers in which this law can hardly fail, sooner or later, to involve the cultivators of the soil, and in conformity to the reasoning contained in the Report of the Committee of the last Session upon the same subject, some material change must be contemplated; your Committee, therefore, cannot avoid suggesting, whether, under a full view of all the circumstances, it may not be the duty of Parliament to turn its immediate attention to the ruinous consequences which must follow an unlimited importation and free sale of the surplus produce of the whole agricultural world, which is known at this time to be in a state of glut, at least equal to what prevails within this kingdom, no less impatient for, and unprovided with a market, with a commodity raised at much less charge than our own, which the proprietors would be ready to sell even at a considerable loss, rather than not dispose of it at all.

The excessive inconvenience and impolicy of our present system have been so fully treated, and so satisfactorily exposed in the Report already alluded to (p. 10 and 12), that it is unnecessary to do more than refer to it; adding only, that every thing which has happened subsequent to the presentation of that Report, as well as all our experience since 1815, has more and more tended to demonstrate how little reliance can be placed upon a regulation which contains an absolute prohibition up to a certain price, and an unlimited competition beyond that price; which so far from affording steadiness to our market, may at one time reduce prices already too low still lower than they might have been even under a free trade, and at another, unneces-

sarily enhance prices already too high; which tends to aggravate the evils of scarcity, and render more severe the depression of prices from abundance.

The mode in which these excessive inconveniences may receive some modification (laying for the present out of the question what permanent basis may be ultimately the fittest for our corn trade) appears to consist in the imposition of a duty upon all foreign corn, whenever upon opening our ports it should be admissible for home consumption. The occupier of the land would thus obtain, in proportion to the amount of such duty, a protection, which is withheld from him under the existing law; but in return for such protection, it is no more than reasonable towards the consumer, that the import price should be fixed at a rate somewhat lower than 80s. because the new duty would otherwise not only check the sudden and overwhelming amount of import, but also enhance the price beyond that which it might reach under the present system; nor must it be lost sight of in any future regulation, that owing to the great alteration in our currency, 80s. may and do now represent a different and considerably higher value than in 1815, as measured by the price of all articles of consumption.

Should Parliament decide to legislate during the present Session, your Committee would recommend, that after our wheat shall have reached 80s. whenever circumstances, not now to be foreseen, may have effected so great a change, a lower price may be assumed for the future import, subject to a duty.

When the importers know that their grain can in no case come into the market without paying a certain sum as duty, besides the charges of importation, warehousing, and other incidental expenses, they will be less ready to adventure rashly than under an entirely free trade; they will also withdraw their corn which may be lodged in warehouses gradually, and with more circumspection than they

do at present, and will naturally endeavour to feed the market rather than inundate it. It is now their interest to take their whole stock, immense as it may be, at once from under the King's lock; but when they must pay duty for every quarter which is removed, they will prudently calculate the time that any large stock may remain on hand before they can dispose of it to advantage.

The foundation of any future Bill should be the principle of so far modifying the operation of the existing law as to obviate, as far as may be, by the imposition of reasonable duties upon the admission of foreign grain for home consumption, the sudden and irregular manner in which such foreign grain may now be introduced upon the opening of the ports under circumstances inconsistent with the spirit and intentions of the law.

For carrying this purpose into effect, it would be expedient, after the ports shall have opened at 80s. (subject to a scale of duty hereafter to be fixed) to preserve the principle of an import price at a rate somewhat lower than the existing import price of 80s. and your Committee are of opinion, that 70s. would not be an improper limit to assign to that price.

That a duty from 12s. to 15s. should be imposed upon foreign wheat for home consumption, when the price is from 70s. to 80s.

Also, that a duty of 5s. should be imposed upon such wheat, when the price is from 80s. to 85s.; after which the duty should be reduced to 1s.

And that a further additional duty of 5s. should be imposed upon wheat imported or taken out of warehouse for home consumption, for the three months after the ports open, and when the price is from 70s. to 85s.

And, for the purpose of rectifying the scale which governs the import, the general proportion which the price of oats bears to the price of wheat, appearing to exceed the proportion which was assumed to exist, when 27s. was fixed as the import price of oats, your Committee sug-

gest, that it would be expedient to increase that price so as to bear a more accurate proportion to the price of wheat.

The scale at which barley is estimated appearing to be more correct than that of oats, the same proportion which it now bears to wheat appears fit to continue, under any future alteration of the import prices.

The 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th clauses of the Act, which regulates the importation of corn, make provision for admitting corn, meal, or flour, being the growth, product, or manufacture of any British colony or plantation in North America, for home consumption, when British wheat is at a lower price than 80s.; with regard to which colonies, it will be consistent with good faith and sound policy to preserve the same relative preference above foreign corn, in the event of any future alteration being applied to the scale of prices or of duties.

In compliance with an application made to them by several of the owners of the foreign grain now stored in warehouses, your Committee have already recommended, that permission may be granted, under sufficient and adequate regulations, to convert it into flour, and export it in that shape, by which means some portion of this large stock will be carried out of the kingdom, and remove all apprehension that the quantities so ground down can ever enter into competition with our home produce; but in the event of a large portion not being thus disposed of, and still remaining in store, it appears practicable to adopt a method which may render this remainder also advantageous, rather than detrimental in its effect upon the value of British corn, whenever the average price of our wheat shall have risen to 70s. and fluctuate between 70s. and 80s.; for if it be then allowed to be taken out for home consumption, subject to a duty of 17s. per quarter, for the first three months, and afterwards to a duty of 12s. the interest of the proprietors of this grain will be brought strictly into unison with that of the British agri-

culturist, and into direct hostility to that of all other importers of foreign grain; so that every endeavour will be resorted to, on their part, to advance the price to 70s. that they may liberate their own stock; but to keep it below 80s. that they may exclude all foreign competitors. The equitable claim which the holders of the grain, already deposited under the Act of the 55th of the late King, appear to possess, will thus be beneficially preserved to them, and the danger of an immense influx of foreign produce will be mitigated and deferred, if not wholly prevented.

It must, of course, be left optional to the proprietors in question, to avail themselves of this permission, or to abide by the conditions of the existing law, under which they imported; but in the first case, the payment of a moderate duty will enable them, at an earlier period, to enter a market over which they may exercise some controul conjointly with all the dealers in British corn; while in the other, they can hardly expect to stem the torrent of foreign produce poured in upon our existing supply, and the immediate depression of value which must unavoidably accompany it.

If the circumstances of this country should hereafter allow the trade in corn to be permanently settled upon a footing constantly open to all the world, but subject to such a fixed and uniform duty as might compensate to the British grower the difference of expense at which his corn can be raised and brought to market, together with the fair rate of profit upon the capital employed, compared with the expense of production, and other charges attending corn grown and imported from abroad, such a system would in many respects be preferable to any modification of regulations depending upon average prices, with an ascending and descending scale of duties; because it would prevent the effects of combination and speculation in endeavouring to raise or depress those averages, and render immate-

rial those inaccuracies which, from management or negligence, have occasionally produced, and may again produce such mischievous effects upon our market; but your Committee rather look forward to such a system as fit to be kept in view for the ultimate tendency of our law, than as practicable within any short or definite period. A protecting duty which might at this day be hardly sufficient to guard our home market from the most overwhelming competition, might, when the excessive abundance on the Continent shall have been absorbed, operate against the real wants of this kingdom, and subject the growers, as well as the consumers, to the greatest inconveniences. Years of dearth may again make it indispensable to have recourse to foreign produce for a part of our supply, although in seasons of ordinary plenty it may be hoped that our own agriculture has been so improved and extended, as to secure this kingdom from a state of dependence upon other, and eventually hostile, territories for the subsistence of its population.

Your Committee have felt it their duty, for obvious reasons, to lay, without further delay, before the House, the result of their deliberations; but they would consider that they had omitted a most material part of the task imposed upon them, if they neglected to inquire into the present system upon which foreign corn is warehoused. Your Committee are now engaged in carefully investigating this important subject, and they will not fail to report the result to the House as early as the nature of their inquiry will permit.  
—1st April, 1822.

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My readers will see that I have no room for any comments on this famous REPORT. I will do this Next Week in a Letter addressed to the *Ploughmen*, who have, at any rate, *common sense*.